



Visual Arts
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
April 2024

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	
Degrees Offered	B.A.	
Date of Last Review	2015-2016	
Modules Reviewed	Honours Specialization, Major, Minor in Art History Honours Specialization, Specialization, Major, Minor in Studio Art Honours Specialization, Major, Minor in Museum and Curatorial Studies Minor in Social and Environmental Justice in the Visual Arts	
External Reviewers	Dr. Judy Major-Girardin, Professor Emerita McMaster University	Dr. Anne Dymond, Department of Art University of Lethbridge
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Daniel Shrubsole, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies), Faculty of Social Science	Logan Kennedy Doctoral Student Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing
Date of Site Visit	February 15 & 16, 2024	
Date Review Report Received	March 7, 2024	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: March 28, 2024 Faculty: April 8, 2024	
Evaluation	Good Quality	
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: May 22, 2024 ACA: May 29, 2024 Senate (for information): June 7, 2024	
Year of Next Review	2031-2032	
Progress Report	June 2027	

Overview of Western's Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Visual Arts Program delivered by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program's self-study brief;
- the external reviewers' report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Undergraduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-U) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western's IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

The Department of Visual Arts offers programs in three disciplines, Art History, Museum and Curatorial Studies, and Studio Art, making it extremely well placed to respond to the contemporary cultural climate. Students often take courses in two of these three subject areas that are effectively paired in the three Honours Specialization modules: Art History and Museum and Curatorial Studies, Art History and Studio Art and Studio Art, leading to a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, which also has a strong Art History requirement.

A total of 204 students were enrolled in Visual Arts modules in 2022-23. In 2022, there were 61 modular completions.

The self-study was informed by an alumni survey (n=27), a student focus group (n=10) and a dedicated faculty-member retreat in April 2023. Staff members and technicians were equally consulted in May 2023.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Visual Arts Programs. They offer six recommendations with considerations for further enhancement.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Hands-on studio practice accompanied by theory, and small classes taught by professional artists with national and international exhibition profiles.
 - Students winning global undergraduate awards attest to the program's success in developing critical writing and communication skills.
- Home to the only undergraduate Major in Museum and Curatorial Studies in Canada; which prepares students for careers in the cultural sector with equal emphasis placed on curation and collections management, arts administration.
- Strong enrolment in 1000-level course offerings, which is at 100%.
- New Minor in Social and Environmental Justice in the Visual Arts.
- Recent successful hires through the PARF Black Scholar Search and PARF Indigenous Scholar search.
- The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre includes technical facilities supporting sculpture, printmaking, and digital media, the ArtLAB gallery exhibition space and the Cohen Exploration Lab enabling students to explore the integration of STEM into their visual arts practice.
- Direct Entry option into the BFA degree program.
- Success having alumni return to present on their current activities.
- Visual Arts Internships with placements across Western Faculties and partnered with many community, artistic and cultural institutions in and around London.
- 3+1+1 Agreements with Partner Universities in China and Taiwan.
- The Program's Instagram Handle WesternuVisArts and hashtag #WesternUcreates have both been instrumental in getting students involved and excited about program events and offerings.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- Concerns pertaining to human resources and sustainability of expertise relate to Museum and Curatorial Studies, Art History and technical support for print media.
 - Lack of enough Art History professors to teach more 1st year Art History courses that are in demand.
- Implementing ongoing mechanism for gathering feedback from current students and alumni.
 - Mechanism for tracking and maintaining contact with alumni.
- Further addressing accessibility barriers for program members with wheelchairs or assisted walking devices.
- Unable to offer more first-year courses due to spatial limitation in the Visual Arts building for Studio Art.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, an internal faculty reviewer, and an internal student reviewer were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
- Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Associate University Librarian
- Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Chair, Visual Arts
- Undergraduate Chair
- Director of Museum and Cultural Studies
- Undergraduate Chair
- Administrative Staff
- Program Faculty
- Program Students

Following the virtual site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the Visual Arts Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to SUPR-U by the Internal Faculty Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

External reviewers noted *“a strong sense of collegiality in student, staff and faculty groups that is paralleled in the integration between the three areas of study and the shared space and open concept areas in the building. The high level of engagement in the review process is testament to how invested the unit is in its future.”*

Strengths of the Program

- The flexibility of the program structure effectively maintains strong core areas of study while providing maximum student choice in directing their own learning and promoting cross-disciplinary learning.
- Partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborations with local, national and global organizations - Fanshawe College, The Synthetic Collective and, programs in Taiwan and China, provide varied pathway options for students.
- EDI initiatives that enhance this program include 1) recent faculty hires from diverse backgrounds which result in expanded areas of expertise; 2) visiting artist, Indigenous Artist in Residence, Curator in Residence, and visiting speaker initiatives diversify faculty and expose students to a range of professionals; 3) outreach and cross-listings with other departments; and 4) gender inclusive washrooms.
- *Sustainable Curating* and focus on *Environmental and Social Justice* are innovative approaches in the field of art.
- The Major in Museum and Curatorial Studies is unique in this area in Canada. This program has a high national profile and provides students with excellent internship opportunities in the local community and further afield.
- New Minor in Social and Environmental Justice reflects the needs and concerns of the present-day encouraging students to engage with current issues.
- Meetings with students and course evaluations speak very highly of faculty; it is clear the faculty are providing high impact experiences.
- The Department raises its profile through an excellent website, departmental newsletter and active roster of special events and activities.

Prospective Improvements for the Program to Consider

- Curriculum enhancements for consideration: 1) a more structured approach to health and safety to provide greater consistency in training and systematic record keeping; 2) adding a course in contemporary Indigenous art in Canada as a required historic course; 3) having students in the Honours Specialization in Art History and Museum Studies take Museum and Curatorial Studies 4605E; 4) students expressed a desire for more in-person courses in Art History; 5) more regular course offerings in the Major in Museum and Curatorial Studies; 6) increased opportunities to learn about careers, writing an artist statement, CV

and bio, applying to exhibitions, applying to galleries and advanced study, employment options, etc.

- Review instructor capacity in Museum and Curatorial Studies and consider supporting Art History and Museum and Curatorial Studies courses with more stable indigenous expertise.
- Enhance communication with students by: 1) reinvigorating student clubs; 2) have student representatives attend department/committee meetings; 3) place a suggestion box in the main office where students can leave agenda items for forum discussions: 3) host orientation sessions at the beginning of the academic year.
- High cost of software, which is borne by students, may be contributing to the lower enrolments in media courses; financial assistance should be provided to students to offset this cost.
- The focus on Social and Environmental Justice could be made more visible in the program learning outcomes.

While the areas of improvement noted in the last two bullet points were not explicitly mentioned as part of the formal recommendations made by the external reviewers, they remain suggestions for consideration by the Program.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers' Recommendations	Program/Faculty Response
Recommendation #1 Safety & Health of all Living Things Enhance current safety training with a required, non-credit, Safety/Equipment and Material Handling course.	<p>Program: The Undergraduate Chair has been in contact with the Visual Arts Operations and Communications Manager who oversees all the technicians and technical areas in the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre. Not all courses in Visual Arts require Health & Safety training, but some require very specific health and safety training, which is currently being met. Specific online training, meeting the demands of specific courses is being discussed in summer 2024. Whether to add Program Learning Outcomes around Expertise in Health and Safety is being discussed at the Full Time Faculty Retreat summer 2024.</p> <p>Faculty: The Department is currently meeting health and safety requirements for courses with very specific needs in these areas. The Dean's Office supports the Department's plans for further discussion of training in the area and whether it should be added to degree outcomes.</p>
Recommendation #2 Resources Prioritize expertise in Museum and Curatorial Studies for any upcoming hiring opportunities and consider bolstering instructional capacity in this area until that time.	<p>Program: The Department fully supports a new full-time or a limited term faculty member for the Museum and Curatorial Studies program.</p> <p>Faculty: In keeping with Faculty and University practice, the Department can request full-time hires as part of the budget process (in the Fall). Decisions on requests depend upon a number of variables, including enrolment (course and program), current and future staffing expectations, and budget. The Dean's Office cannot currently anticipate the outcome of these discussions.</p>
Recommendation #3 Future Planning Succession planning is recommended to preserve existing strengths, maintain core areas, and offer new possibilities.	<p>Program: The Department understands that there are impending faculty member retirements and fully supports the hiring of young faculty members specifically in Art History.</p> <p>Faculty: This is a concern for the Faculty as a whole, and both the current and incoming Acting Deans see complement planning as a priority. All Departments will be asked to engage in this process over the coming year – and to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.</p>

<p>Recommendation #4 Professional Practices Instruction Explore ways of introducing professionalism earlier and in more formalized ways in the studio program.</p>	<p>Program: Many points raised in this recommendation are already being met in Studio Art 2602A/B and Studio Art 3602A/B courses as well as Museum and Curatorial Studies 3660A/B/Y courses. This information might not have been clearly explained during site visit meetings. As the program was not required to give the reviewers course outlines, it is understandable that there may have been confusion on these issues.</p> <p>Faculty: A closer examination of some course outlines (e.g., for Studio Art 2602A/B, Studio Art 3602A/B, and Museum and Curatorial Studies 3660A/B/Y) suggests that this kind of instruction is already embedded in programs. It is something that the Department can continue to monitor in an on-going fashion.</p>
<p>Recommendation #5 Communication Recommended enhancements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active faculty participation in revitalizing the student club, with representatives to attend departmental meetings or select committees. • students opportunities to contribute to the departmental newsletter. • consideration of greater channels for the collection of student feedback. • enhancements to student gathering spaces. 	<p>Program: Last year, the student organization VASA (Visual Arts Supporters Association) disintegrated after years of strong student growth and participation. Without an undergraduate organization in place, communication between the department and students has not been optimal. In the last few weeks, a group of 2nd year students have started a process to rebuild VASA. The executive members of VASA will be invited to future Department Meetings. Also, students must opt for the Department Newsletter as the program cannot mass e-mail them. The newsletter contains pertinent information, but if students choose not to receive it, they do miss out on critical information.</p> <p>Faculty: The student organization was not operating in 2022-23. The Department's plan to support it and to invite student leaders to meetings are further indication of their commitment to healthy communication with students. The Faculty leadership – especially the Associate Dean (Academic) – can also work with the Arts and Humanities Student Council to support the local student group in Visual Arts.</p>
<p>Recommendation #6 Accessibility and EDI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space audit from a disability lens is needed as the building does not meet current norms for accessibility. • For all modules, make one course that includes significant non-Western content a requirement. 	<p>Program: The Undergraduate Chair has been in contact with the Visual Arts Operations and Communications Manager to implement an Accessibility Audit of the building, similar to the Safety Audit that occurred in Fall 2023.</p> <p>Timetabling issues exist with making a required Non-Western Art History course. While not explicitly discussed with the reviewers, it should be noted that all Art History courses take a global approach because that is the direction of recent scholarship. For instance, courses such as Art History 2632F/G on Canadian Art, feature Indigenous art within a culturally appropriate framework.</p> <p>Faculty: The Dean's office fully supports the Department's planned accessibility audit and will work with the Department in this and other areas relevant to EDI to ensure that the Department's facilities and programs are inclusive and accessible.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Program Chair, and the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan. Of note, recommendations specific to hiring are outside the scope of this review process – proposed actions below are in support of prioritizing and planning.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1 Safety & Health of all Living Things Enhance current safety training with a required, non-credit, Safety/Equipment and Material Handling course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss sufficiency of Health and Safety measures with the Visual Arts Operations and Communications Manager. Assess areas where specific online training is needed and craft plans for development and implementation, as relevant. Determine whether to add Program Learning Outcomes around Expertise in Health and Safety at an upcoming Faculty Retreat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate Chair 	By December 2024
Recommendation #2 Resources Prioritize expertise in Museum and Curatorial Studies for any upcoming hiring opportunities and consider bolstering instructional capacity in this area until that time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request hires for the Museum and Curatorial Studies program as part of the annual budget process. Prioritize Museum and Curatorial Studies as opportunities to further build capacity arise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate Chair Department Chair 	By December 2024
Recommendation #3 Future Planning Succession planning is recommended to preserve existing strengths, maintain core areas, and offer new possibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As guided by the Faculty, commence faculty complement planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Chair Dean's Office 	By December 2025

<p>Recommendation #4 Professional Practices Instruction Explore ways of introducing professionalism earlier and in more formalized ways in the studio program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor the adequacy of professional practice instruction throughout the program. • Ensure students are made explicitly aware of how and where instruction and resources related to professional practices occur in the program – perhaps through the student association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate Chair 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation #5 Communication Recommended enhancements relate to the student club and departmental newsletter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support current students with the revitalization of the Visual Arts Supporters Association (VASA). • Invite appointed executive members of VASA to attend Department Meetings. • With support from the Dean's Office, work with the Arts and Humanities Student Council to support the local student group in Visual Arts. • Emphasize to students the importance of opting in to receive the Department Newsletter which contains pertinent information about the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate Chair • Associate Academic Dean 	<p>By December 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #6 Accessibility and EDI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space audit from a disability lens is needed as the building does not meet current norms for accessibility. • For all modules, make one course that includes significant non-Western content a requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an Accessibility Audit of the building, to ensure that the Department's facilities and programs are inclusive and accessible. • Explore ways of expanding exposure to non-Western content in required courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate Chair • Operations and Communications Manager 	<p>By July 2025</p>